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The following article appeared in the Daily Planet,
Chatham, during the

LOCAL OPTION CAMPAIGN ISSUE OF DEC. 23-1911

and is the personal experience of the Editor of that Paper who was sent to Owen Sound and Galt to study existing conditions. The paper took no part in the controversy. Its columns were used freely by both parties and the article was favorably commented upon by fair minded Electors as an unprejudiced presentation of a difficult subject.

The Planet and Local Option

The most interesting and important topic of conversation in Chatham at the present time is the subject of Local Option. The ratepayers of this city are to-day face to face with what may very reasonably be termed a crisis in the history of Chatham, and as far as the great question of temperance is concerned, and the all-important interrogation to be answered on the first of January next is "Shall Chatham, IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE TEMPERANCE CAUSE, inaugurate a system of what is termed Local Option; or shall the ratepayers consider it better to continue under the license system?"

Since the campaign started in Chatham many statements have been made. Numerous letters have been written to the newspapers, and gentlemen from Local Option districts have been brought to the city to address meetings. It is a fact that much that has been said and written on this question has been of a very conflicting nature. Certain things have been contended by one side only to be flatly denied by the supporters of opposite views, until the ratepayers, for the most part, are, to say the least, somewhat confused and in doubt as to which argument to believe. It is also noticed that some of the statements on both sides of the question strike a good many people as being greatly exaggerated. The question is one over which men on both sides of the argument naturally become enthusiastic, and their very enthusiasm may in a measure be responsible for any extravagant views they may hold.

The Planet considers it a duty, as a reputable journal serving the public, to take every means possible to provide the people with information upon public questions of moment, and to offer such advice as may be deemed expedient, after a careful consideration of the various features in evidence. In view of the above mentioned conditions, therefore, and as a result of the important bearing that the issue will have upon the every-day life of the citizens of this community, this Great Home Journal despatched a representative to Owen Sound and Galt, where Local Option is now in force, with instructions to find out at first hand what the actual conditions are, and—with

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any personal prejudices he may have had entirely eliminated—to describe those conditions as they were found. He was also instructed to interview representative citizens, to obtain their views on this subject in dispute, and to report such statements as they were given to him. In this article he will attempt to give in a fair way and reasonable manner, a straightforward and honest fulfillment of his assignment.

In the first place, there is no possible argument in favor of Whiskey.

Big thinking men the world over are agreed on this point. Whiskey is a curse, and there is no denying the fact. Now the question comes, what is the most effective way of dealing with that curse and what action should be taken to most successfully CONTROL the misery that it creates? So that in this election, the question of temperance is not directly at stake. Most men ARE believers in temperance. The whole question is whether or not Local Option is a good TEMPERANCE measure, and whether or not it ANSWERS the purpose to which all temperance men and women are striving.

Under Local Option, the public bars are closed, and all liquor stores are closed. If any man wishes to have liquor in his house for his own use, he may order it from a licensed town, and the liquor may be shipped in to him, but he may not offer it for sale, nor keep it in his possession with the intention of selling it.

So that this clears up one point. Local Option does not keep liquor out of the city. It merely prohibits people from SELLING it in the city. Any man can carry as much liquor as he desires into a Local Option district, and the law does not stop him.

The first place visited was Owen Sound—a town that has been much quoted in the present campaign. Owen Sound is a town of some 13,000 inhabitants, about the same size as Chatham. There are not many towns or villages in the immediate vicinity where liquor is sold, and it might very reasonably be pointed to as a concrete example of what Chatham would be under Local Option.

The first impression, after a visit to Owen Sound, is that Local Option DOES NOT injure the business interests of a town.

This is a bald statement, but it seems to be borne out by the facts in Owen Sound. The town is going ahead in leaps and bounds and everyone seems to be prospering to a very marked degree. Business is good in Owen Sound, and trade flourishes even though the bars are closed.

It would be equally unfair to say that Local Option CREATES this prosperity in Owen Sound. The town is favorably situated and naturally must grow as a manufacturing centre. Its merchants and manufacturers are wide-awake business men, and for that matter people have to live whether there is Local Option or not, and they have to buy things, creating trade and business, so that the statement is easily supported that Local Option does not affect the general business of a town one way or the other.

Some of the business men who have identified themselves actively in the Local Option controversy find that their opponents in the cause decline to buy in their stores. In this way men on both sides have lost business, and they suffer through airing their views. But what they lose someone else gets, and the trade goes on just the same.

It is a fact that since Local Option has been inaugurated in Owen Sound the Police Court cases of drunkenness have greatly increased. There are more drunken men making their appearance in the police court to answer to charges of excessive drinking. Some people would lead you to believe that this proves that there are more drunken men in Owen Sound since Local Option carried, but this is a pretty hard statement to support.

Owen Sound was a pretty famous place for drinking even before they got Local Option, but The Planet is informed that the enforcement of the law under the license system was very lax. Six or seven months before Local Option carried, the government decided to be more strict in the enforcement of the license law in Owen Sound, and they appointed a new License Inspector. This Inspector started out to do his duty and to "clean up" Owen Sound as far as infractions of the license law were concerned. Before he had a good chance to show what he could do toward improving the town under the license system, Local Option was carried by the people. Since that time this Inspector has been giving the strictest enforcement

of the Local Option Law that is possible. He is active in the extreme in instituting prosecutions whenever he thinks he has the least chance to succeed. He is assisted by the police department, who are more alert in arresting men for drunkenness and other crimes, and this may account in a large measure for the big increase in the court convictions.

So this leads The Planet to place minor importance upon the fact that convictions for drunkenness have INCREASED.

The police court records, however, show two things:

(1)—Men are still getting drunk in Owen Sound, and this drinking is leading them to other crimes that are worse.

(2)—Local Option has been proven ineffective in SAVING men from the drinking habit—and it is thereby stamped as an incomplete and fallible TEMPERANCE measure.

Men can get liquor in Owen Sound, any time they want it, and they can get enough of it to get gloriously drunk whenever they want to.

Then there is the argument of the Assessment, and the loss the town sustains in the way of taxes from the hotels.

When Local Option passed in Owen Sound, the hotel men appealed to the court of revision for a reduction in their assessment, but the appeal was thrown out. They appealed further to the County Judge and he made a reduction of 25 per cent. in their assessment. Since that time there was a general increase in the assessment of 20 per cent., all over the city, to answer the growing demands of the town, but that first 25 per cent. reduction for the hotel men still holds good. Whether the County Judge will sustain his own decision when the matter comes up again is another question. Whether or not the County Judge of Kent would take the same kind of a stand in over-ruling the court of revision in Chatham, should they decide to leave the hotel assessment as it is, is still another question. No matter how it goes, the question of reduced assessment is not regarded very seriously in Owen Sound. The town is prosperous and the matter of a few thousands of dollars in the assessment is not felt to a very material

extent. It would probably be the same in Chatham, as this city is prosperous too. Besides if the loss of a little money to a whole community were the strongest argument against Local Option, and if Local Option is proven a good thing, then this argument is unworthy of an honest man with a feeling for humanity, so in this contest it may be dismissed as having very little weight.

One of the greatest objections that residents of Owen Sound have to Local Option is the fact that it divides the people of the town into two distinct and separate classes—Local Optionists and Anti-Local Optionists. This would not be so bad if the distinction were forgotten except during a Local Option contest, but it is not. The bitter feeling has become a very important part of not only the social, but also the business and even the religious side of the life of the community. Men will not deal with business men who hold opposite views to their own on the subject of Local Option. There is no give and take. The line is firmly drawn, and the people of Owen Sound are by no means a united people on any one subject. Every feature of civic life reflects back to the question of Local Option, and it is said to be impossible to get the people to “pull together” on any single civic project.

In the cause of real temperance, it will be admitted that there are only two ways in which reform can be instituted—either by eliminating the drinking altogether, or by regulating it. In other words, either stop it or restrict the sale of it so that it will do the least harm.

The license system does not stop it, but under the present Ontario license law it IS regulated and restricted. Local Option also does NOT stop drinking, and so the whole question to be decided according to the accepted rules of debate is, “can the drinking be regulated BETTER under Local Option than it can under the license system?”

How is the drinking in Owen Sound REGULATED under Local Option?

The drinking is all done SECRETLY. While a lot of it is detected by the Inspector and the police, as the court records show, the fact remains that the great bulk of the drinking goes undetected because the police and the Inspector, even though they are as alert as it is possible

to be, CANNOT FIND IT. The blind pig flourishes in Owen Sound. This is admitted by even the friends of Local Option, but in conversation with The Planet, the Inspector stated that as far as he knew there was not a single blind pig in Owen Sound at the present time. THEY CANNOT BE LOCATED. Drunkards get liquor. They get all they want, and they get drunk. Young men get liquor, and they get all they want, no matter whether they happen to be over 21 or under 10 years of age.

How then does Local Option REGULATE the drinking of liquor in Owen Sound? That is a fair question.

The Planet was enlightened by an official authority upon the manner in which the hotels break the law. The bar-room is leased to a young fellow who wants to take a chance on making some money by selling liquor. He carries his stock in a bottle in his hip pocket. When his customers come into the bar-room he produces his bottle and sells his drinks. Of course, he is careful to know, before the bottle is produced, that all of the men in his bar-room at the time are "live wires." If there is any fellow of whom he is doubtful, he calmly says "Boys, there is nothing doing," and the crowd disperses and congregates a little later, minus the gentleman suspected of being a spotter, or a dangerous man to sell to. Of course this scheme has its faults, and at some time or other the young liquor dealer with the leased bar-room is caught and charged with the illicit selling of whiskey. He is found guilty, probably, and given a hundred dollar fine. He is also told that if he ever comes up again on a similar charge, there will be no fine—he will be imprisoned. There have been some who have actually served time for the second offence, but usually they are not willing to take the chance. They go out of business immediately. They have in the most cases earned sufficient money to pay the fine and retire with a snug bank account. Instead of the Bar being put out of business, however, it still goes merrily on only under the management of a new proprietor, who buys out the lease of the young man who was fined. In this way, the hotel proprietors are immune from prosecution, and they realize good sums of money through leasing their bars. It is said that there are hotelmen in Owen Sound who are heartily

in favor of Local Option, body and soul, because they are making more money out of the selling of whiskey under Local Option than they did with the license.

Of course this is not all one-sided. It must be said in order to state the case fairly that the men who are able to get whiskey in a bar-room under Local Option are all men who the bar-keeper believes will go into court in the event of the "house being pinched" and swear they didn't get a drink. In other words, he must have the reputation of being ready to go into court and swear to a lie. So that one would think that this would reduce the number of men who would try to get a drink in a Local Option town. This is true. The number IS reduced, but the men who don't drink in this way are the CASUAL drinkers—men whose desire to drink is not strong enough to cause governments to legislate to save them from the liquor evil. The drunkards, the men with the strong appetites, and the young men of the community are the ones who avail themselves of this opportunity to drink—the very men that the honest temperance men are trying to SAVE. Men with appetites for drink will get the stuff if it is around any place, and they will usually degrade themselves to any extent to get it. Becoming perjurers is a matter of small moment to them so long as they get their "booze." Young men are found to have a fascination for the exciting experience of "taking a chance." Stolen fruit to the ordinary young man is generally sweeter than that which is on his father's table. This is the class of people that the honest temperance man is striving to save. They form the offenders against the Local Option Law in Owen Sound. The respectable drinkers have the liquor in their own homes. Drunkards will get hopelessly drunk anyway, if they can get the liquor, no matter what system of law prevails. There are other drinkers in Owen Sound who under the license system would go into a bar and take one or two drinks and go home, while under Local Option the experience is that when they get into a place where they can buy liquor they drink until they get drunk.

Owen Sound was a bad drinking town before Local Option passed, and it would not be expected that Local Option would stamp out all the drinking. The statement is confidently made, however, by responsible men who have watched events closely, that if the same determined

effort were made to enforce the liquor license law as IS mad to enforce Local Option, there would be less drinking in Owen Sound than there is right to-day. There can no doubt be found men in Owen Sound who dispute this. After all it is a matter of opinion, as there has been no way of proving it as yet. It is a big question, with plenty of room for argument on both sides, and it is a question upon which big-minded men are bound to differ. The Planet was careful to interview only men who were looked upon as being representative citizens, and broad-minded business men, with no personal interests in the liquor traffic, and this was the essence of their views. As an opinion from men who live under Local Option conditions, it does not necessarily have to be accepted, but it is worthy of at least passing consideration by people who are contemplating the advisability of establishing similar conditions of civic life.

Other facts which appear on the surface in Owen Sound, while not very surprising, are worthy of consideration too. A large number of young boys carry around whiskey flasks in their hip pockets; people keep liquor in their homes who never before thought of doing so; men now buy a bottle whereas formerly they bought a drink; men who formerly drank beer, now drink whiskey, because beer is too cumbersome to handle by men who break the law in selling it.

The temperance people admit most of this, but these facts are merely pointed to in order that people may come to a reasonable decision as to whether Local Option REGULATES the drinking of liquor better than the license system.

While in Owen Sound The Planet attended the police court. A man named Lewis was up for beating his wife because she wouldn't give him fifty cents with which to go and buy liquor. Lewis had been up several times before on the charge of being drunk. The last time was on the 14th of October. He was found guilty of being drunk and sentenced to 21 days. At the trial the other day the police officer who laid the charge against Lewis for beating his wife stated on oath that since Lewis got out of jail after serving the 21 days in October, he had never drawn a sober breath. He had been drunk CONTINUOUSLY

ever since—almost two months, or a month and a half. His companions were bad and he coldn't keep away from it. He said that the stuff was shoved under his nose at every turn. The police magistrate sent him to jail for a month because, he said, HE KNEW WHAT IT MEANT FOR A DRUNKARD TO BE AT LIBERTY IN OWEN SOUND OVER CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR'S.

These are plain facts, and are given merely for the information of Chathamites.

Among the men interviewed by The Planet was Mr. Raven, a banker. He said that morally Local Option was bad. He went so far as to say it was a curse to Owen Sound. Mr. McLaughlin, head of a large biscuit manufacturing concern, said he thought it would be better for Owen Sound to have licensed hotels, with a proper administration of the license law. He thought there would be less boys drunk under those circumstances. He said Local Option did not injure the business of the town, and he spoke very rationally in giving his views in a quiet, unimpassioned manner. He thought that the education of the people would do more to lessen drinking than stringent laws. He said it was his experience that the bulk of the business men of Owen Sound were opposed to Local Option. M. D. Butchart, commonly referred to as the richest man in Owen Sound, with over \$200,000 invested in real estate, mostly on the main street, and the president of the Men's Club of that place, said he knew for a fact that Local Option was a failure. He had nothing to gain through making the statement. He had no interests in the liquor traffic, and Local Option doesn't inconvenience him in the least, as he keeps liquor in his house and always has done so. He is not an excessive drinker. He is one of the most popular and respected men of Owen Sound. He did not think Local Option kept Owen Sound behind commercially, and it didn't prevent him from further investing money in real estate. At the present time he is building a new, handsome block on the main street. He affirms that Local Option has not lessened the drinking in Owen Sound. There is more "straight whiskey" drunk now, when formerly people took beer. He said, moreover, that there were 10 to 1 drunks on the

streets now more than formerly. It leads men to take false oaths, and has a bad effect morally. He thought licensed hotels would further the temperance cause better than Local Option as it works in Owen Sound. Archie Hay, President and Managing Director of the Northwestern Chair Company, with 600 workmen on his pay roll, said the men who are in favor of Local Option were men who were not out at nights to see what was going on. The men who know the ropes know that Local Option is a failure as a temperance measure. He said he knew from personal knowledge that it was a failure. "Ask the employers of labor," said he, "and find out the difficulty they have with their men since Local Option passed." Mr. Hay told of a contractor in his factory who voted for Local Option. Some of the men under this contractor were "boozers." When they had licenses and any of his men got drunk he knew where to go to get them to take them home and straighten them away. Now these men get drunk in blind pigs, and, instead of being off a day or two, they are off the job for weeks at a time, and the contractor doesn't know where to find them. That contractor, who was an earnest advocate of Local Option when it was first brought up, is now utterly opposed to it. Ex-Mayor Matthew Kennedy, in business in Owen Sound for fifty years, said there was too much theory in Local Option and not enough practicability. He had had more trouble with his men being drunk since Local Option passed than he had formerly. Two or three of his men had been off since election night. He did not say that the same might not occur under a license system, but the trouble has by no means been reduced. Local Option has failed in Owen Sound to measure up to the standard set for it by its champions. Mr. Kennedy admitted the evils of intemperance, but he thought the license system if properly worked would regulate it better than Local Option. When Local Option passed, there were four policemen. Now there are six required to enforce the law. Mayor Lemon said personally he was opposed to Local Option, "bone and sinew." He thought it was a poor temperance measure. Owing to the fact that as Mayor he represents both factions, he did not wish to give an interview in his official capacity as Mayor. A large number of the merchants

were also interviewed. While they were for the most part utterly opposed to Local Option, they did not wish their names used as it would hurt their local trade should their statements get back to Owen Sound people.

These excerpts from interviews are given merely for information that the people of Chatham may know what the representative people of Owen Sound think of Local Option as it is found there. They are given merely as OPINIONS, and they should be so regarded and taken for whatever the people of this city think they are worth.

Probably the most important interview was with Rev. Dr. Daniel, a former pastor of the Park Street Methodist church of Chatham, and a man well known and highly respected by all men of this city. Dr. Daniel has been in Owen Sound for the same length of time that Rev. Mr. Morris has been in Chatham. The Planet representative met him on the main street in Owen Sound, and incidentally asked him for his opinion of Local Option.

"Well," said the doctor in a serious manner, "that is a very hard question to answer. I find that it is a very big question, and I do not consider that I have been in Owen Sound long enough to give a definite statement as to whether Local Option is a success or a failure in this town. I find that it is a question upon which big, broad-minded men—Christian men—differ widely. I find that there are so many preponderous features connected with it that it would be impossible for me to form a definite opinion of whether it is good or bad."

Now this is sensible talk. If all the men of both sides would take the sensible view that Dr. Daniel takes on this great question there would be less bitterness in Local Option campaigns, and we feel justified in adding that it would be better for the real cause of temperance.

If Local Option were a glowing success in Owen Sound and Dr. Daniel knew it, we believe he would be glad to come out boldly and say so. If Local Option were a failure and Dr. Daniel knew it, we feel justified in stating that we know Dr. Daniel well enough to venture that he would not hesitate to express his opinion to the public. Dr. Daniel has been in Owen Sound as a Methodist pastor for almost six months, and yet he is undecided. This goes to show the proposition that the casual visitor is "up

against" when he goes to investigate the working of Local Option there, and on this account considerable dependence must be placed upon the opinions of men who have been there all the time—men who are certainly in a position to know, and men who are in every way representative and responsible citizens.

The Planet representative also visited Galt. Here conditions were found to be quite different than they are in Owen Sound. It is admitted that there are no blind pigs in Galt. The hotel keepers are not breaking the law, and very little liquor is sold in Galt. The Police Court convictions have not been affected one way or the other since Local Option passed. The matter of the assessment and reduction in tax receipts is too small to be considered at all. Business is not injured, and Galt is growing as a prosperous Ontario town. People are pretty well satisfied and there is not much agitation over the question of temperance. If there is one large community in Ontario where Local Option should work well it is Galt.

And of course there is a reason for this. Galt's "salvation" is Preston, a little town three miles away, where liquor is sold under the license system. Since Local Option passed in Galt, the number of fares on the electric railway running between Galt and Preston has increased by about 18,000 a month. The young men and the drinkers make regular excursions to Preston, where they drink and get drunk. Special policemen have been placed on the late cars returning to Galt, for the purpose of preserving law and order. Since Local Option carried in Galt the railway has inaugurated a half hour service between the two towns to accommodate the excursionists who go to Preston to drink booze. Preston merchants encourage this traffic by offering to return the fifteen cent car fare on all purchases. The police court records for drunks in Preston has trebled as a result of Galt men getting drunk in Preston. Mr. Barnhart, who formerly ran a liquor store in Galt, now runs a liquor store in Preston, and he makes as high as four deliveries a day in Galt, delivering to private individuals. He has established a motor truck service between the two towns to facilitate the easy importation of liquor to Galt.

These are the facts, so it will be seen that Owen Sound is a far better comparison for Chatham than Galt. Chatham and Owen Sound are more parallel cases.

In Galt many merchants—big merchants—were found to be opposed to Local Option as it works in Galt. The police magistrate says it does some people good and others harm. He also added as an opinion that if men are sober only when they can't get a drink the proper thing would be to lock up the drunkards.

Galt's growth is attributed by the Local Optionists to the fact that the bars are closed. Preston is growing, too, however, and Berlin beats them both, and the bars are open in Preston and Berlin, so there seems to be very little in this argument.

There are some men in Galt who supported Local Option who are opposed to it now. Mr. Keyes, the Chief of the Fire Department and the proprietor of a livery stable in Galt, said that "it made a bar-room out of his stable." He said he puts to bed in his stables on an average of four drunken men a week—men, he says, who would not get drunk under the license system. They get drunk because they now buy a bottle whereas formerly they bought a drink.

Other men can be found who say that Local Option is all right in Galt.

So this is the evidence as it was received, and we have tried to give it out in a fair, reasonable and honest report. It is by no means a one-sided question. We agree with Rev. Dr. Daniel, of Owen Sound, that it is a question upon which even ardent Christian men hold opposite views, and it is something that men should figure out for themselves in their own minds, after a careful consideration of all the information it is possible to gain on the question. Exaggerated statements should be disregarded and extravagant claims should be eliminated on both sides. A man can be a true temperance man and still oppose Local Option. It is—as we have stated before—purely a question of whether or not Local Option answers the cause of real temperance reform.

As long as whiskey is MANUFACTURED it WILL be sold and it WILL be consumed. The only way in which temperance reform can be brought about is through

either destroying the source of supply, or placing proper restrictions upon the sale of the product. And, as we pointed out earlier in this article, the people of Chatham should vote solely upon the question of whether or not Local Option REGULATES the selling of Whiskey better than the license system, for it has been shown and proven that NEITHER system will ELIMINATE the drinking.

The Planet's view on the subject, as a newspaper, is quite well known among the Local Option workers. The Planet believes that the Whitney Government has provided Ontario with an excellent liquor license law, and that if this law were STRICTLY enforced it would regulate the drinking, and work in the interests of real temperance better than Local Option is doing in Owen Sound. We admit that the law has not been strictly enforced right here in Chatham, but we believe, as a matter of principle, that if the temperance people would devote themselves to bringing about an absolutely strict enforcement of the liquor license law, they would be better satisfied with the results themselves than they would be under Local Option.

This is The Planet's view of the case, and we give it for what it is worth. Sir James Whitney stated a short time ago in one of his characteristic utterances that "a public man who did not have—and did not express—an opinion on a public question is a public fool." We agree with Sir James, and we also believe that what applies to a public man applies with equal force to a public newspaper.

We also believe that in all fairness men in the liquor business should be compensated in the event of the passing of such a measure as Local Option, but then, that raises another question in which there is room for more controversy.

The Planet considers it a duty to provide all possible information to the people on public questions that affect their liberties, their financial interests and their moral welfare. It was with the desire to provide such information that a representative was sent to Owen Sound and Galt. While The Planet has, as a result of these investigations, stated a conviction upon the issue at stake, we are rather

inclined to leave it largely an open question for men to think out for themselves. No man is forced to accept the opinion of any other man, or any newspaper, or public institution, unless it appeals to his better judgment and his inward personal convictions. On this account The Planet will not try to force any particular Local Option opinion upon the people of Chatham. We have no words of condemnation for any man who, as a result of personal convictions, supports either side in the present fight. We rather incline to the opinion expressed by Dr. Daniel that good Christian men are bound to differ in regard to it, but they should give their opponents credit for being just as sincere as they are themselves. The Planet would wish to discourage all personalities in the present campaign. Let the issue be well discussed, but let it be remembered that abuse is the last refuge of the man with a poor cause.

With this article The Planet closes its part in the campaign. While every opportunity will be given to the opposing forces to air their views in print, The Planet will have no further comment to offer. We feel that in giving the information contained in this article we have performed our duty as a self-respecting public journal, and we have tried to perform that duty conscientiously and without prejudice toward either section of the conflicting parties. It is now "up to" the ratepayers to personally figure out the decision in their own minds, and decide the verdict for themselves.

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